

# Fact Sheet:

## Marine National Monuments

*President Bush Announces New Steps To Protect Our Nation's Marine Environment*

**On January 6, 2009, President Bush designated three areas of the Pacific Ocean as marine national monuments.** By designating these areas as national monuments, the Administration ensures that the marine environment will receive the highest level of environmental recognition and conservation. Destruction or extraction of protected resources within the boundaries of these monuments will be prohibited, as will commercial fishing in the coral reef ecosystem areas of the monuments. Scientific and recreational activities may be permitted consistent with the care and management of the protected resources of these monuments. For marine life and seabirds, these places will be sanctuaries to grow and thrive.

- **Combined, these designations represent the largest fully protected area in the world.** Under the President's plan, 195,274 square miles will be conserved.
- 1. **The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument consists of three components:**
  - **The first component of this monument is the waters and submerged lands encompassing the coral reef ecosystem of the three northernmost islands.** These islands represent some of the westernmost territory in the United States – 5,600 miles from California. They are home to more than 300 species of stony corals.
  - **The second component is the Marianas Trench.** The trench, the site of the deepest place on Earth, is approximately 940 nautical miles long and 38 nautical miles wide within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States.
  - **The third component is a series of active undersea volcanoes and thermal vents.** Twenty-one active hydrothermal submarine volcanoes and vents support life in the harshest conditions imaginable. Many scientists believe extreme conditions like these could have been the first incubators of life on Earth. Further research will allow us to learn more about life on the bottom of the sea.
- 2. **The Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monuments protects the pristine coral reef ecosystems around Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands, Johnston Atoll, and Wake Island – the site of a pivotal battle in World War II and an important military base today.** These areas support a large number of nesting seabirds and migratory shorebirds, and their pristine coral reefs contain hundreds of thriving fish species and large apex predators and are also home to endangered turtles.
- 3. **The Rose Atoll Marine National Monument protects the pristine coral reef ecosystem around a remote part of American Samoa.** One of its most striking features is the pink hue of fringing reef caused by the dominance of reef building coralline algae. Rare species of nesting petrel, shearwaters, and terns also thrive on this island, and the waters surrounding it are a home for many species depleted elsewhere in the world, including giant clams and reef sharks.

**The President also announced America's first new UNESCO World Heritage Site nominations in 15 years.** The two sites are the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands) and Mount Vernon. Only two sites can be nominated each year.